



Review of 'Guide to Ecstacity'

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GUIDE TO ECSTACITY

Nigel Coates

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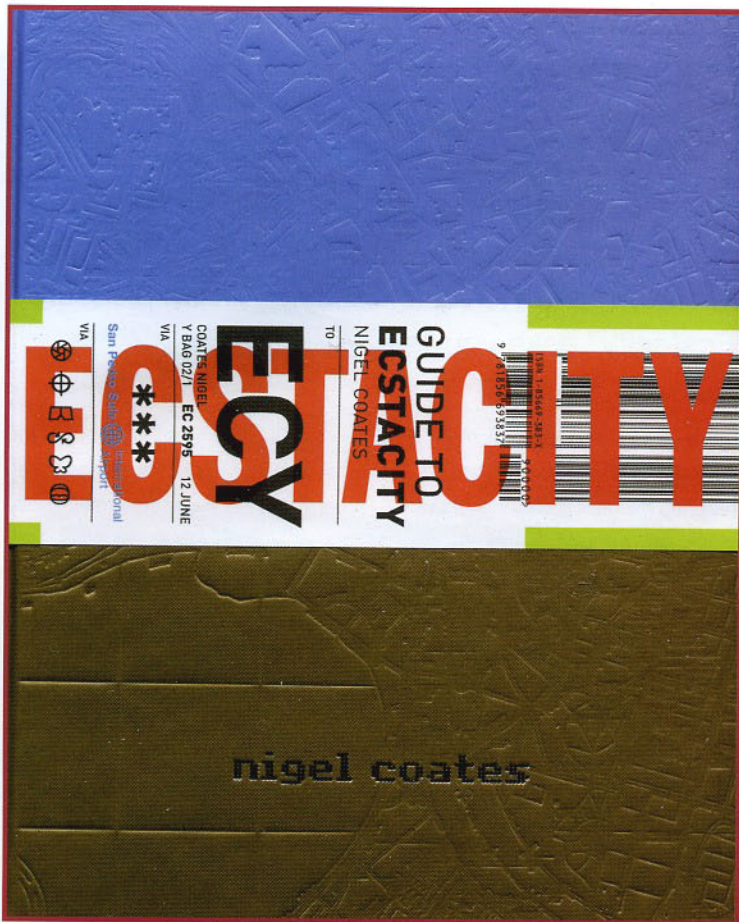
Zeldin set the tone by exploring this exhilarating and kaleidoscopic trawl through the topography of high and low culture with a sense of seriousness and intelligence.

Much of the book's philosophy and ideas are informed by Coates' earlier 'incarnation' in NATO (Narrative Architecture Today) - a group he formed with Robert Mull and others at the Architectural Association. Set up as a kind of punk counter culture against the existing architectural establishment, they produced exhibitions and magazines such as "Gamma City". Their manifesto type magazines were produced in that long forgotten era of 'Pre Photoshop'. "Ecstacity" is a development of this earlier work through the medium of super graphics and typographic space.

Our journey through "Ecstacity" oscillates between a sense of dystopia and a delirious realism of the substance and events of the modern metropolis. Carefully selected images support the 'themed' sections and featured cities, that together with graphic loops, contours and morphed shapes chart our journey through the "E-zone".

Desire plays a big part in this city with Bataille and Baudrillard called in to uncover the latent sexuality. Coates is at his best in placing the body back into architecture as a prime motivator in how we experience space. Images of his projects for "The Body Zone", "Oyster House", and the non 'pc' titled "Leg Over Chair" play with the sensual charge between our bodies, space and the city.

There is a sense of parody in the book that counters the marching energy of the manifesto like text. Only Coates could combine images as diverse as sushi bars, erotic underwear, the Pope and Maneki Neko the waving Asian money cat. Hichiko the Japanese version of 'Greyfriars Bobby' ►



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Moving between guide, manifesto, novel, autobiography and fashion shoot the ambition is to produce a diversity of cultural references to stimulate and provoke our view of what makes a city. Six chapters (with design icons to match) chart our progress through the terrain; "Tuning in", "Locking on", "Undressing", "Letting Go", "Cranking Up", and "Flipping out". Essays by Marcus Field, Brian Hatton and Theodore

Wrapped in an airline baggage tag and embossed on its cover with map textures of the city, this book signals a departure. At 464 pages, filled with photographs, images, diagrams, maps and charts, it is our guide to Nigel Coates' unique "Ecstacity". Fact and fiction interweave in this blending of Tokyo, Cairo, London, New York, Rome, Mumbai and Rio de Janeiro that Coates has reshaped into his own virtual 'collage city'. Buildings, projects, events and objects by Coates, his office, students at the RCA and various architects appear re-

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► appears, sitting at the massive Shibuya interchange in Tokyo, waiting for 11 years for his master to return (a small voice or is it a bark in the massive metropolis?). Few architects would present themselves as Coates does sitting at the beach like some kind of Canute II with reversed baseball cap, holding back the waves that will destroy his 'Jarmanesque' muse of the city made of sand. Coates knows only too well that reality can be bruising to architectural theory and seeks a kind of promiscuous distance from mainstream architecture. His "Body-Zone" featured at length in the book draws him ever closer towards the Body Politic.

In order to really enjoy this book you have to forgo some typical expectations and just 'go with it', trusting Coates' narrative ability as our assumed tour guide to his 'E-land world'. The underlining of words that

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refer to the counter spine glossary - which works distractingly in reverse, breaks up the main text. Some of the themes are perhaps overrun while others seem cropped to fit the various narrative sections. Inevitably London is the most 'fleshed out' of the seven cities while the others feel more peripheral to the text.

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Paul Clarke

Guide to Ecstacity

By Nigel Coates

Published by: Laurence King Publishing

Price: £35.00

CONTENT

BY: AMOMA / Rem Koolhaas /
Simon Brown & Jon Link

Can it really be almost a decade since "S,M,L,XL" literally blockaded the architectural shelves as the heavyweight champion of "bigness"? Having spawned a multitude of similar books Koolhaas/OMA and now AMO, have returned with a sequel. It was always going to be a hard act to follow and inevitably "Content" was produced faster than its predecessor and for quicker consumption in the rapidly changing world of architectural publishing and exhibitions. Gone is the graphic design force of Bruce Mau and the comprehensive coverage of OMA's buildings and urbanism. Instead we are offered a fast paced magazine romp through the "Junk-space" graphic world of 2004. Images of dripping paint support the 'hot off the press' look, which catches the OMA/AMO projects on the hop.

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'bookazine'. "Content" is deceptively dense and extensive with at times compacted and tiny print that tests your vision to the limits. Birkhauser's "IN - EX projects" publications are perhaps the closest rival in trying to put architecture on the magazine shelves. The price alone makes this a much more accessible book than previous 'wallet busting' productions.

The 'agit-prop' cover becomes an unexpected foray into the world of "Private-Eye" type photo collages. George W sports his crown of freedom fries against the massive

CCTV complex that aims to welcome a debate on the cat and mouse game of architecture and politics. Several essays explore the geo-political-spatial landscape that shapes the life or death of any large scale project. Such is the flux of the modern world now that buildings are branded (before being built) so they can survive in our market driven culture. In "Content" the branded building icons take on an aggressive anthropomorphic character.

Koolhaas assures us that "Architecture is a fuzzy